Principles of Body Mechanics

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DISCLOSURE

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What is “Body Mechanics”?

Body Mechanics refers to the way we move when we perform every day activities. Good body mechanics help protect your body, especially your back, from pain and injury.

Disclaimer

The following are “general guidelines” and will not apply to all people and all situations. Different circumstances may cause one to vary from these guidelines. Unfortunately, very few situations allow the use of “perfect” body mechanics.

Objective

To present guidelines to help protect the body and reduce the possibility of injury, especially injury to the back.

Principles of Body Mechanics

Stand straight with a slight arch in your lower back.

Principles of Body Mechanics

Position feet to provide a good base of support (usually shoulder width apart).

Principles of Body Mechanics

Turn, do not twist.

(When turning, turn the whole body. Do not twist at the waist.)

Principles of Body Mechanics

Get close to the object to be lifted.

Principles of Body Mechanics

Always arch the lower back inwards before lifting.

This will help to protect the discs and muscles from injury. Even if you can only arch your back a little, it will still help.

Principles of Body Mechanics

Bend at the knees and hips to get to low places.

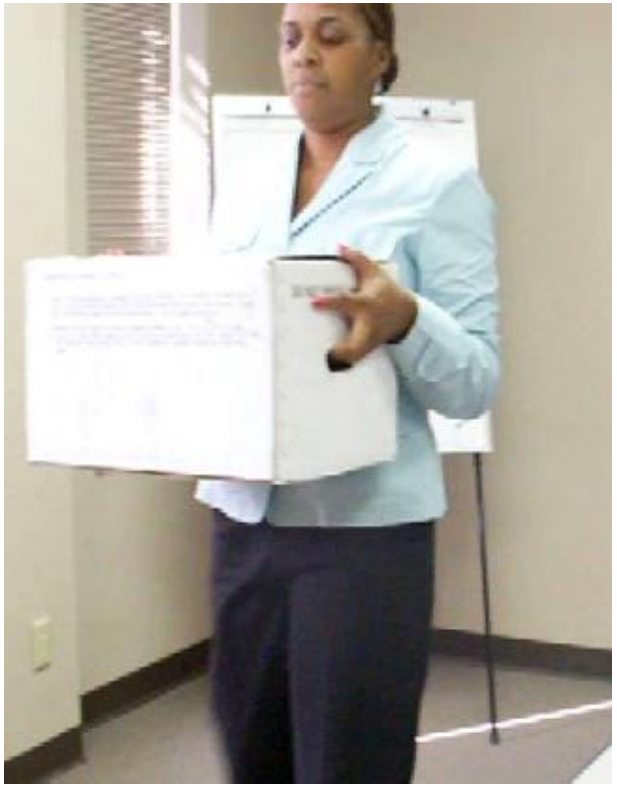
Squat, instead of bending at the waist. Do not bend over.

Protect Your Back

Use your leg muscles (not your stomach or back muscles) when lifting objects.

Principles of Body Mechanics

Hold objects close to your body when lifting and carrying.



“2” Second Rule

Follow the “2 second rule”. The body has a natural feedback mechanism which allows the body and brain to communicate and decide if a weight is too heavy to lift without injury. You should always take at least 2 seconds to achieve full lifting force. This will give the natural feedback mechanism a chance to tell your body if a weight is too heavy to lift safely.

“2” Second Rule

Lift on a count of 3, but don't jerk! When you jerk up on a heavy weight, this mechanism doesn't have time (2 seconds) to react before injury occurs.

Principles of Body Mechanics

Push or slide, rather than lift, whenever possible.

Proper Planning

- **PLAN, PLAN, PLAN!** Proper planning is the single most important safety rule when preparing to lift a heavy object or person.
  - Think about how you will lift, and review the lift in your mind to identify possible problems.
  - Are there IV poles, or catheter bags? How will they be protected during the lift?
  - How can the lift be made safer or more efficient? The less time the person is in the air, the safer it is for everyone.
  - Where will the worker place his/her feet, and are there any objects that need to be cleared away before lifting?
  - Doing a “practice run” of the move will often help to identify problems.

Communicate with the Client

- **Explain to the client what you are about to do**

- Make sure he/she understands what is expected of them. This helps to ease fear, and may prevent an accident caused by a terrified client.

Remember…

- **Stand straight with a slight arch in your lower back.**
- **Position feet to provide a good base of support.**
- **Turn, do not twist.**
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- **Get close to the object to be lifted.**
- **Always arch the lower back inwards before lifting.**
- **Use leg muscles, not stomach or back muscles, when lifting objects**

Remember…

- **Bend at the knees and hips to get to low places.**
- **Hold objects close to your body when lifting and carrying.**
- **Follow the “2 second rule”. Push, or slide rather than lift whenever possible.**
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- **PLAN, PLAN, PLAN!**
- **Explain to the client what you are about to do**

Protect Your Body From Injury

Use Proper Body Mechanics!

Reference

"Good Body Mechanics / Employee Safety: A Skills Update". The Institute for Caregiver Education, In Service Training, Chambersburg, PA.